

# ACCREDITATION TIPS

## SELF-ASSESSMENT MANUAL WRITING THE FOUR-PART ANSWER



The four-parts of the self-assessment manual are:

1. Description
2. Appraisal
3. Plan
4. References

The first three parts cover the intent and performance of your program/process and the fourth part is the support and authentication for the previous parts. Here are some overall tips when writing the four-part answer:

- Be brief, be concise...only write what is needed
- 1 page is the goal (not the rule)
- Do not use first person
- Use a professional/business tone
- Maintain a single writer tone
- Have someone else proofread the responses before submitting
- Resist using slang or proprietary industry terms...remember, any reader should understand what is written
- Use the interpretation guide

A common error in writing performance indicators is not linking key words from the performance statement to the description, appraisal, plan, and even the references. This disconnect leads to descriptions not focusing on what the performance statement is asking, appraisals being continuations of the descriptions and not establishing a true evaluation of what is written in the description, and plans not focusing on what is uncovered in the appraisal, stating the required need, modification, or update within a specific timeframe established by the agency.

The following example utilizes one of the performance indicators peer teams regularly see as an issue with agencies. The example demonstrates how authors of performance indicators can connect the verbiage from the performance statement across all four sections of the performance indicator. Having a solid understanding of the performance statement goes a long way towards a clear and concise performance indicator. Different colors are used for emphasis, directed towards the definitions provided. The colors demonstrate the word connection across all four sections as each color is represented in each section.

### Performance Indicator

10A.4 A **conflict resolution process** exists between all **external organizations** with whom the agency has a **defined relationship**.

### Breaking Down the Performance Statement with Definitions

A **conflict resolution process** (conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict)

**exists** (be found, especially in a particular place or situation)

**between** (indicating a connection or relationship involving two or more parties)

**all** (whole amount, quantity, or extent of)

**external organizations** (entities that exist outside of the described agency)

with whom the **agency** (a business or organization established to provide a particular service)

has a **defined relationship** (specific to the condition or fact of being related; connection or association).

### Description

The ABC fire department has an **established conflict resolution process** as a method to resolve any disagreements **between** entities the department has a **relationship** with. The **process** is outlined in **Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 10A-1, Conflict Resolution**, and is incorporated into **most external organizations agreements** including **Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) agreements**, **Anytown Medical Service (AMS) transport service contract**, **civilian organizations**, **utility companies**, and other **private contractor agreements** doing business with the department.

### Appraisal

The department's **conflict resolution process is in place** and provides a **method for settling conflicts**. **SOG 10A-1, Conflict Resolution**, has been **incorporated** effectively into **all MABAS, AMS, and utility company agreements**. The **conflict resolution process** has not been **included** in **civilian organization** or **private contractor agreements**. While there has not been a need to take action with those **external agencies** where the **guideline** is in effect, it would have been beneficial in resolving multiple conflicts **with an external private contractor that services fire department equipment**.

### Plan

The department will review annually, determine relevancy, and update when required **SOG 10A-1, Conflict Resolution**. If an update is implemented, **those external documents** containing the **SOG** will be amended as part of the annual external document review process **with** proper notification made to those **organizations** it affects. Working with the department's **legal representative**, the department will introduce and implement the **conflict resolution process** to all **civilian organizations** and **private contractors providing services** to the fire department by February 1, 2021.

References

**Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 10A-1, Conflict Resolution**

**Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Agreement - Sample**

**Anytown Medical Service (AMS) Contract**

**Civilian Organization Agreement - Sample**

**Private Contract Agreement – Sample**

**ABC Fire Department External Document Review Checklist**

## Description

- Use Present Tense
- Highlight the specific resource, program, or process
- Answer the underlined words in the performance indicator
- Answer "what is your agency currently doing?"
- Provide just the facts,; no need for historical context

## Appraisal

- Use Past Tense
- Evaluate/measure/compare the effectiveness over a time period and outline the evaluative approach used
- Answer "How does your agency know what it's doing is working?"
- Don't be afraid to show it can be done better
- Use date and outcomes; quantitative is better than qualitative

## Plan

- Use Future Tense
- Use appraisal information to build the case for the plan
- Answer "What will your agency do to improve, maintain, or sustain?"
- Include a timeline or frequency of review
- Develop outcome as a result of your plan

## References

- 2-3 references are sufficient
- Ensure they are current
- Use references to support the description, appraisal, and/or plan
- Point to specific pages if the reference document is large